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ABSTRACT

This 1974 report describes the history of the Commission on College Geography, which was supported by the National Science Foundation. There are four major parts to the paper. Part I deals with the objectives of the commission. It was established in 1963 as an outgrowth of the work of the Liberal Education Committee appointed by the Council of the Association of American Geographers to work in various ways to improve geographic programs at the college level. Specific objectives are outlined in the paper. Part II lists the names and university affiliations of commission members and of individuals who served on panels of the commission but who were not members. Part III discusses accomplishments of the commission. These included development of communication mechanisms, organization of institutes and workshops, publications, and consulting services. Lists of the Commission's publications, including resource papers, technical papers, general series publications, and consulting services documents, are provided. The fourth and concluding part of the paper deals with evaluation. The Commission was never formally evaluated with regard to its organization and structure or the overall impact of its activities. However, it is the opinion of the authors of this paper that the basic framework of its structure and organization was sound. Also, a 1971 evaluation designed to focus primarily on the awareness and use of specific selected publications indicated that there was a high level of awareness of the publications and that they were being used by the profession with a high degree of effectiveness. (RM)

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FINAL REPORT

COMMISSION ON COLLEGE GEOGRAPHY

by

John F. Lounsbury

1974

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COMMISSION ON COLLEGE GEOGRAPHY

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The Commission on College Geography was first established in 1963. During its first two years of existence it was called the Geography in Liberal Education Project. This project was an outgrowth of the work of the Liberal Education Committee appointed by the Council of the Association of American Geographers in 1961. By 1965, its activities had broadened considerably and adapted the title of the Commission on College Geography. From its beginning in 1963, it operated under the auspices of the Association of American Geographers and was continually and fully supported by a series of grants from the National Science Foundation.

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION

During its first years of existence, the Commission defined its general objectives. These overall goals of the Commission and its working panels were to work in various ways to improve geographic programs at the college level compatible to the broader educational needs of colleges and universities throughout the nation. This necessitated the development and distribution of materials concerning the overall role that modern geography should play in college curricula, including programs of study in geography and programs of study to which geography should contribute significantly.

Specifically, the efforts of the Commission and its panels focused on:

1. the development of approaches to integrate geographic programs within the broader higher education context, including participation in interdisciplinary curriculum efforts;
2. the development and publication of pertinent materials to facilitate the incorporation of recent developments and recent research in undergraduate programs;
3. the advisement of individuals and institutions in strengthening geography curricula;
4. the investigation of ways and means to increase the effectiveness of undergraduate courses, including the development of new techniques of presentation; and
5. the generation, discussion and development of new schemes to improve undergraduate geography courses and programs.

The efforts and materials developed by the Commission were directed specifically to instructors and students involved in American undergraduate college geography courses and programs. However, in reality the developed materials were widely used by persons in related fields and a very large number of requests for these materials have been received by institutions and individuals in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

1. COMMISSION MEMBERS

The members of the Commission were appointed by the Council of the Association of American Geographers to three-year terms of office. Normally the Commission was composed of 15 persons, including one or two from related disciplines. The Commission members' terms of office were staggered and usually five new members were appointed annually. Care was exercised so that the composition of the Commission at any specific time reflected a wide range of the major sub-fields of the discipline; representatives from large and medium-sized universities, four-year colleges; and two-year colleges; and a geographical cross section of institutions in various sections of the United States and Canada. Persons that have served on the Commission either as chairmen or members are as follows:

John S. Adams	University of Minnesota
James R. Anderson	U.S. Department of Interior (Formerly University of Florida)
H. Homer Aschmann	University of California, Riverside
Harold J. Barnett	(Economics) Washington University
Ian Burton	University of Toronto
Vernon Carstensen	(History) University of Washington
Saul B. Cohen	Clark University
Richard D. Dastyck	Fullerton College
Fred R. Eggan	(Anthropology) University of Chicago
Paul W. English	University of Texas, Austin
Edward B. Espenshade, Jr.	Northwestern University
Gordon J. Fielding	Orange County, California Transit District (Formerly University of California, Irvine)
Norton S. Ginsburg	University of Chicago
William A. Hance	Columbia University
Chauncy D. Harris	University of Chicago
John Fraser Hart	University of Minnesota
J. Thomas Hastings	(Education) University of Illinois
Richard D. Hecock	Oklahoma State University
Robert E. Huke	Dartmouth College
Leslie J. King	McMaster University
George Kish	University of Michigan
Marion J. Levy	(Sociology) Princeton University
Richard E. Lonsdale	University of Nebraska
J. Ross Mackay	University of British Columbia
Ian R. Manners	University of Texas, Austin
Melvin G. Marcus	Arizona State University
Marvin W. Mikesell	University of Chicago
Edward T. Price, Jr.	University of Oregon
Arthur H. Robinson	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Harold M. Rose	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Kennard W. Ramage
Robert H. T. Smith

Kirk H. Stone
Edward J. Taaffe
Richard S. Thoman
Harold A. Winters
Wilbur Zelinsky

New York State University College, Brockport
Monash University, Australia (Formerly
Queen's University)
University of Georgia
Ohio State University
California State College, Hayward
Michigan State University
Pennsylvania State University

2. PANELS OF THE COMMISSION

Over the course of its life-span the Commission organized several panels to investigate specific problems in undergraduate college geography. Definite tasks were assigned to these panels which, in many cases, culminated in publications or in written reports to the Commission as a whole. The life-span of the panels varied depending upon the nature of the problems investigated. The major active panels were the Panels on Resource and Technical Papers; Physical Geography; Computer-Assisted Instruction; New Course Outlines; Program Inventory and Development; Environmental Education; Two-Year Colleges; Basic Geographical Bibliography; Teacher Education; Regional Conferences; and Consulting Services. In all cases Commission members served on the panels either as chairmen or members. In many cases an individual Commission member served on several panels. Individuals who served on panels but were not members of the Commission were as follows:

Wesley C. Calef
Douglas B. Carter
Martha Church
Dale E. Courtney
Donald R. Deskins, Jr.
Edward A. Fernald
Lyle E. Gibson
James M. Goodman
Leonard L. Hodgman
Ann E. Larimore
Gordon R. Lewthwaite
Robert B. Marcus
Robert B. McNee

Curtis S. Murton, Jr.
John N. Rayner
Robert E. Reiman
Fredric A. Ritter
Stanley H. Ross

Gerard Rushton

Illinois State University
Southern Illinois University
Wilson College
Portland State University
University of Michigan
Florida State University
California State College, Dominguez Hills
University of Oklahoma
Joliet Junior College
University of Michigan
California State University, Northridge
University of Florida
American Geographical Society (Formerly
University of Cincinnati)
Michigan State University
Ohio State University
Appalachian State University
Morgan State College
(Formerly of California State University,
Northridge)
University of Iowa

Theodore H. Schmudde
Earl J. Senninger
Edward W. Soja
David M. Solzman
Lawrence M. Sommers
Thomas P. Templeton
Richard Weber
Philip L. Wagner
Julian Wolpert

University of Tennessee
Charles Stewart Mott Community College
University of California, Los Angeles
University of Illinois, Chicago Circle
Michigan State University
Mesa Community College
Anne Arundel Community College
Simon Fraser University
Princeton University (Formerly University
of Pennsylvania)

III. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

During the period of the Commission's life-span, the impact and accomplishments of the Commission and its working panels have been diverse. Several of the projects generated and developed under the auspices of the Commission appear to be long lasting and show promise of being viable and ongoing activities well beyond the formal termination of the Commission. The major accomplishments may be enumerated as follows:

1. DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS

The Commission, from its beginning, expended considerable effort to involve, formally and informally, large numbers of persons in the academic community, government work and private industry in the process of evaluating existing courses and programs and in the development of innovative materials. One approach utilized was to schedule the meetings of the Commission and its panels on college campuses throughout the country and formally or informally discuss the work of the Commission and problems in college geography with the staff of the host and neighboring institutions. This arrangement proved to be successful as a communication device and as a means for involving a large number of college instructors throughout this country and Canada. During its life-span, the full Commission or major panels held meetings on the campuses of Arizona State University; University of British Columbia; University of California, Irvine; University of Chicago; University of Cincinnati; Clark University; Columbia University; Eastern Michigan University; University of Florida; Fullerton College; University of Illinois; Joliet Junior College; University of Miami; University of Michigan; University of Montreal; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; New York State College at Brockport; University of North Carolina; Northwestern University; University of Oregon; Purdue University; Simon Fraser University; Southern Atlantic University; Syracuse University; University of Toronto; Tulane University and University of Wisconsin, Madison. In most all cases, instructors from neighboring institutions participated in the meetings.

Also, the Commission regularly organized sessions to be held in conjunction with the national and regional meetings of professional organizations and state academies of science. Usually these sessions focused on the work of a specific panel and were designed to solicit ideas and discussion. Perhaps, as a result of these sessions, several small interest groups have developed that bring together geographers, usually with the same specialties within a local area, and on an irregular basis, to discuss common areas of concern. These informal meetings have been encouraged by the Commission but were not supported financially by the Commission.

During the period of the last two years the Commission organized Regional Conferences in six areas, geographically dispersed in the country, to bring together local college instructors, from both two-year and four-year institutions to discuss problems such as program development in the two-year colleges; subject matter innovations in undergraduate college courses; and communication among geographers in state colleges, private colleges, and large universities. These conferences were not part of a nation-wide program but it appears that knowledge gained from the six centers will have broad applicability, serve as "demonstration" centers, and the strengthened professional ties which resulted will be self-perpetuating without the Commission's continued participation. Regional Conferences were hosted by Anne Arundel Community College; California State College, Dominguez Hills; Charles Stewart Mott Community College; Daytona Beach Community College; Kansas State University; Michigan State University; Morgan State College; Portland State University; and St. Johns River Community College. Individuals from neighboring institutions (in some cases, over 200 miles distant) participated in the Conferences.

In addition, the Commission maintained communications in the conventional manner by publishing and widely distributing "A Summary of the Activities of the Commission on College Geography" on an annual basis; distributing an informal "Physical Geography/Environmental Newsletter" on an irregular basis; and, on occasion, circulating reference lists of new, inexpensive books and/or materials. Brief status reports or items of interest were published frequently in the AAG Newsletter; Professional Geographer; Journal of Geography; Junior College Journal and other professional media during the Commission's life-span.

2. ORGANIZING INSTITUTES AND WORKSHOPS

The Commission, in cooperation with selected universities, developed several specialized Summer Institutes for College Teachers of Geography, designed to familiarize participants with new materials and techniques. These Institutes, supported by the National Science Foundation or the Office of Education, were held at the Ohio State University; University of Minnesota; University of Florida; University of Delaware; and New York State University College at Brockport. Also, the Commission organized

several formal, one-day Workshops held in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the Association of American Geographers. These workshops were concerned with instrumentation, computer use, and application of innovative subject materials.

About 500 participants total were involved formally in all the Commission sponsored Institutes and Workshops. Although formal evaluation data are not available, informal follow-up contacts indicate that the Institutes and Workshops were of significant value to most of the persons participating.

3. PUBLICATIONS

Perhaps, the most tangible accomplishment of the Commission was the development and distribution of a variety of innovative publications as reference materials for geographers and others in related fields and classroom use. The Commission decided very early that the development of relatively short, widely circulated, paperback publications concerned with new subject matter, innovative techniques and source materials might serve as an important mechanism in upgrading and improving undergraduate courses and programs. The publications developed were of four major series, somewhat interrelated. These series or groups were Resource Papers; Technical Papers; General or Regular Series publications; and Consulting Services documents.

Resource Papers

These papers were designed for student use primarily. In practice, however, many of these papers were used as source material by instructors as well. The topics deal with important subject matter which was not normally included in current texts nor readily accessible in current literature. These papers translated recent research developments and conceptual ideas into expository documents from which instructors of undergraduate courses could select to supplement existing text material. The Resource Papers developed were:

1. Theories of Urban Location, 1968.
2. Air Pollution, 1968.
3. Perspectives on Geomorphic Processes, 1969.
4. Spatial Diffusion, 1969.
5. Perception of Environment, 1969.
6. Social Processes in the City: Race and Urban Residential Choice, 1969.
7. The Spatial Expression of Urban Growth, 1969.
8. The Political Organization of Space, 1971.
9. An Introduction to Spatial Allocation Analysis, 1971.

10. Man and Nature, 1971.
11. Tropospheric Waves, Jet Streams, and United States Weather Patterns, 1971.
12. The Spatial Structure of Administrative Systems, 1972.
13. Residential Mobility in the City, 1972.
14. The Periglacial Environment, Permafrost, and Man, 1972.
15. Conservation, Equilibrium, and Feedback Applied to Atmospheric and Fluvial Processes, 1972.
16. Metropolitan Neighborhoods: Participation and Conflict Over Change, 1972.
17. Computer Cartography, 1972.
18. Society, The City, and The Space-Economy of Urbanism, 1972.
19. Thematic Cartography, 1972.
20. Man and Environment, 1973.
21. The Use of Radar Imagery in Climatological Research, 1973.
22. Misused and Misplaced Hospitals and Doctors: A Locational Analysis of the Urban Health Care Crisis, 1973.
23. Visual Blight in America, 1973..
24. Values in Geography, 1974.
25. Participation, Decentralization, and Advocacy Planning, 1974.
26. Interurban Systems and Regional Economic Development, 1974.
27. Major Job - Providing Organizations and Systems of Cities, 1974.*
28. The Underdevelopment and Modernization of the Third World, 1974.*

* Manuscript completed - ready for printing

Technical Papers

These documents were designed specifically for college teachers as aids in modifying existing courses and programs. In practice, several of the Technical Papers were used by students as source material documents and supplementary texts. The Technical Papers developed were:

1. Field Training in Geography, 1968.
2. Computer Assisted Instruction in Geography, 1969.
3. Evaluating Geography Courses: A Model with Illustrative Applications, 1970.

4. Living Maps of the Field Plotter, 1971.
5. Simulation of the Urban Environment, 1972.
6. Computerized Instruction in Undergraduate Geography, 1972.
7. The Interface as a Working Environment: A Purpose for Physical Geography, 1972.
8. Land Use: A Computer Program for Laboratory Use in Economic Geography Courses, 1972.
9. Bibliography of Statistical Applications in Geography, 1972.
10. Multidimensional Scaling: Review and Geographical Applications, 1973.

General Series Publications

These publications were designed for widespread use by instructors and students and the topics normally were concerned with the broader aspects of geography in general. The publications developed were:

1. Geography in Undergraduate Liberal Education, 1965.
2. A Basic Geographical Library: A Selected and Annotated Book List for American Colleges, 1966.
3. Geographic Manpower: A Report on Manpower in American Geography, 1966.
4. New Approaches in Introductory College Geography Courses, 1967.
5. Introductory Geography: Viewpoints and Themes, 1967.
6. Undergraduate Major Programs in American Geography, 1968.
7. A Survey Course: The Energy and Mass Budget at the Surface of the Earth, 1968.
8. A Systems Analytic Approach to Economic Geography, 1968.
9. A Geographical Bibliography for American College Libraries, 1970.
10. Geography in the Two-Year Colleges, 1970.
11. Manpower in Geography: An Updated Report, 1972.
12. Planning College Geography Facilities: Guidelines for Space and Equipment, 1973.
13. Perspectives on Environment, 1974.

Consulting Services Documents

These publications were designed to aid departments in developing reorganization plans; acquisition of new materials; space use; and development of new programs. The documents developed with this objective in mind specifically were:

Geography as a Discipline, 1973.

Sources of Funds for College Geography Departments, 1973.

Planning College Geography Facilities: Guidelines for Space and Equipment (General Series No. 12), 1973.

Community Internships for Undergraduate Geography Students, 1973.

Undergraduate Program Development in Geography, 1973.

A Geographical Bibliography for American College Libraries (General Series No. 9), 1970.

Guidelines for Consultants (Internal Document), 1974.

Suggestions for Self-Evaluation of Geography Programs (Internal Document), 1974.

4. CONSULTING SERVICES

In 1971, in response to the many requests received by the Commission and the Association of American Geographers to advise on the development and expansion of geography courses and programs, the Commission established a Panel on Consulting Services. In addition to the previously mentioned publications, developed under the supervision of this panel, a group of consultants were trained to provide help and information for geography departments that were expanding their programs or attempting to maintain existing programs in light of decreasing enrollments and retrenchment. Specifically, consultants were prepared to advise two-year and four-year colleges and institutions offering graduate work on Introducing New Geography Courses; Major Programs; Specialized Programs; Interdisciplinary Programs; Facilities Planning; Special Instructional Programs; Planning New Graduate Programs; and Reviewing Existing Undergraduate and Graduate Programs.

As of this date, visitations have been made to about twenty institutions in response to their formal requests for consulting services. These institutions include small four-year colleges, medium-size and large universities. In the great majority of cases, the visitations have resulted in significant changes and improvements to the requesting institution. At the termination of the Commission, the Association of American Geographers will fully assume the functions of the Consulting Services. An advisory committee has been appointed, composed of most of the former members of the Commission's original Consulting Services Panel.

5. INTANGIBLE BENEFITS

The impact of all of the Commission's activities cannot be easily measured nor analyzed. Over 100 individuals, including those associated with the Geography in Liberal Education Project, have been directly involved in the inventory of existing programs and materials, exposed to innovative teaching techniques, and assisted in the development of new subject matter materials and in general curriculum reform. Each of these individuals became more aware of the need to evaluate critically their existing modes of instruction and course contents and to realize that drastic changes, at the very least, must be considered carefully. In all cases, this experience was broadening and stimulating intellectually. In some cases, it was an upsetting experience in the sense that existing traditional educational methods were questioned.

No doubt several thousand individuals became exposed, in some degree, over a period of more than a decade, to the Commission's work. As a result, many consciously made changes in their courses utilizing parts or all of the Commission's publications or putting into effect ideas acquired at a Commission meeting or session. Perhaps many more made changes in their courses or modes of instruction they were not fully aware of themselves as a result of browsing through a Commission document or listening to discussions at Commission sessions.

The Commission was the profession's first full-scale attempt at the national level to investigate seriously problems in college geography. In the planning years just prior to the establishment of the Commission and, during its first years of existence, there was no Executive Director of the Association of American Geographers nor other full-time officers. Unlike recent years, the profession as a whole was not highly organized nor structured to handle major programs involving large numbers of individuals. The experience of conceiving and designing a national project and the organization of manpower was invaluable. This experience prepared individuals and the profession to undertake and organize other large-scale projects or programs.

IV. EVALUATION

1. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission has never been formally evaluated, nor do specific data exist, concerning the validity of its structure or organization. However, it is our carefully considered opinion that, in general, the basic framework was sound.

Since its establishment, the Commission has operated under the auspices of the Association of American Geographers. This arrangement was fortunate in the sense that it provided the Commission with the necessary national-level prestige and established communication outlets. Further, the members of the Central Office of the Association have always been most cooperative and seriously interested in the work of the Commission. Particularly from the time that the Association has had an Executive Director serving on a continuing basis, the cooperation and backing received from the Association has been most helpful. The continuing and unqualified support of the Association has been most essential to the success of the project.

The Commission's organization consisted essentially of the full Commission and working panels. The full Commission, normally consisting of fifteen members appointed by the Council of the Association of American Geographers, seemed to be close to the optimum size for the type of work undertaken. The policy of a rotating membership, normally a member served for a three-year term of office, provided for the necessary continuity and, at the same time, allowed for the introduction of new blood, ideas and enthusiasm. The viability of the full Commission was maintained by selecting the Commission members carefully to reflect a wide range of the major subfields of the discipline; small four-year and two-year colleges, medium-sized and large universities; and a geographical cross-section of institutions throughout the country.

Except for one individual case, the appointment of non-geographers to the Commission did not live up to our high expectations. Perhaps, the underlying problem was to sustain the non-geographer's interest and enthusiasm for a period of three years. However, the one notable exception, who served on the Commission continuously from its beginning to end, was most essential to the success of the project. His contributions to project design, definition of tasks, constructive evaluations and overall perspective were invaluable to the Commission's successful operation.

The concept of working panels to investigate specific problems and to be accountable to the Commission as a whole, proved to be valid and highly productive. As expected, some panels experienced a high degree of success in defining and resolving long-standing problems. Others panels were

as diligent, but because of the nature of the problems being investigated, did not produce clear-cut solutions or tangible results. The average life-span of a specific panel was about three years. Normally a panel could discharge its task in that time. However, some panels, such as the Panel on Research and Technical Papers, were active over a period of seven years.

Although perhaps not to be considered highly critical or serious, the major problems encountered in developing the project and fulfilling its committed tasks, revolved around the organization and use of manpower. Particularly in the early stages of the project, considerable time was spent in channeling the efforts and enthusiasm of individuals along productive tracts and getting them to work together. A continuing problem has been to select the right persons to serve on the Commission and its working panels--individuals who are highly competent in their field of specialization and at the same time are willing to expend a great deal of effort with little or no tangible rewards. In this regard the Commission officers and the full-time officers of the Association were generally successful in the selection of personnel. Such continuing efforts maintained a fine balance in combating negative attitudes and lack of appreciation for committed tasks on the one hand, and encouraged creativeness and innovative ideas on the other.

Overall, the structure and organization of the Commission proved to be workable and highly productive. In our opinion, the same or very similar framework would be utilized if we were to do it again. No doubt minor changes in organization of panels and definitions of tasks could be improved the second time around.

Obviously, the work of the Commission would not have been possible without the continued support of the National Science Foundation. It has been the experience of the Project Director that in all contacts and dealings with the personnel associated with the Foundation that, in all cases, they have been highly professional, helpful and eminently fair.

2. IMPACT OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES

The Commission was not prepared nor budgeted to undertake a final, large-scale, formal evaluation, and no data are available on the total impact of all the Commission's diverse activities. However, in the spring of 1971, the Commission was evaluated to determine what impact certain specific activities had as of that date. This evaluation was supervised by Commission member J. Thomas Hastings, Director, Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation, University of Illinois. A questionnaire was distributed to approximately 1,000 members of the Association of American Geographers selected on a random sample basis. The sample included instructors in the two-year and four-year or more colleges and universities and graduate students.

The evaluation was designed to focus primarily on the awareness and use of specific selected publications. The results of this evaluation indicated that there was a high level of awareness in regard to the publications in question and they were being used by the profession with a high degree of effectiveness.

Further, it is the subjective opinion of the Project officers that the total activities of the Commission have been very well received by the profession. These opinions are based on the large number of requests for publications, the many favorable letters received, and the positive reactions or participants and/or audiences attending Commission meetings and sessions.

Prepared by:

John F. Lounsbury, Project Director
Salvatore J. Natoli, Associate Director
Harold A. Winters, Commission Chairman
J. Thomas Hastings, Commission Member

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V. BUDGETARY STATEMENT

To be prepared by the Central Office of the Association of American Geographers and submitted to the National Science Foundation at a later date.